

What is Claimed:

1 A system for allowing users to simultaneously contact multiple providers to
2 secure an appointment on short notice, the system comprising:
3 a facilitator that sets up, mediates, and monitors communications between the
4 providers and the users and intervenes directly if needed;
5 a web application that includes a web site for facilitating interaction with the
6 system;
7 a provider network for processing information provided by users of the system;
8 and
9 a storage device for storing information processed by the system.

1 2. The system of claim 1, wherein each provider is allowed to view and obtain
2 requests for appointments from new users.

1 3. The system of claim 1, wherein users are both members who have previously
2 registered with the system and prospective members of the system.

1 4. The system of claim 1, wherein the web site includes a list of common medical
2 terms, phrases and pharmaceuticals that are cross-referenced in multiple languages,
3 thereby enabling communications between users and providers who speak different
4 languages.

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1 5. The system of claim 1, wherein the storage device includes a database for storing
2 information and a data server for maintaining the database and information, which is
3 necessary to run the system.

1 6. The system of claim 1, wherein the web application includes a web server for
2 converting all hypertext based requests to native commands for processing by
3 components of the storage device and for dynamically generating HTML pages in
4 response to the requests.

1 7. The system of claim 1, wherein the system provides different types of access and
2 privileges to different users based on at least one predetermined criterion.

1 8. The system of claim 7, wherein users may purchase access to the system through
2 appropriate agents.

1 9. The system of claim 7, wherein users may purchase access to the system through
2 the web site.

1 10. The system of claim 1, wherein users may access the system through on-line
2 means.

1 11. The system of claim 1, wherein users may access the system through off-line
2 means.

1 12 The system of claim 1, wherein prior to using the system, providers must register
2 a practice and the individual providers in the practice and the facilitator activates the
3 registration after predefined contract agreements are ratified.

1 13. The system of claim 12, wherein providers may register practices for future
2 partnerships.

1 14. A method for enabling a user to simultaneously contact multiple providers to
2 secure an appointment on short notice, the method comprising the steps of:
3 entering, by the user, at least one required criterion on a system web site;
4 determining, by the system, each provider within a specified area that meets the
5 required criterion and identifying each provider's proximity to the user's location;
6 providing, by the system, a list of providers to the user;
7 selecting, by the user, multiple providers from the list and submitting the selected
8 multiple providers to the system;
9 notifying, by the system, the selected providers;
10 responding to the notification by each selected provider;
11 displaying to the user, by the system, the responses from each selected provider;
12 confirming, by the user, one response with one selected provider; and
13 notifying, by the system, those providers whose responses were not accepted by
14 the user

1 15. The method of claim 14, further comprising the steps of:

2 allowing providers with available appointment times to specify those times in the
3 system; and

4 displaying all available appointment times that meet at least one required criterion
5 when the user visits the web site.

1 16. The method of claim 14, wherein the step of determining comprises the step of

2 using a geo-locator tool to determine a longitude and latitude of each provider that meets
3 the required criterion.

1 17. The method of claim 14, wherein the step of providing comprises the step of
2 providing biographical information for each provider.

1 18. The method of claim 14, wherein the step of notifying comprises the step of using
2 unique identifiers assigned to each of the selected providers to generate a notification for
3 each of the selected providers.

1 19. The method of claim 14, wherein the step of notifying comprises the step of
2 sending an e-mail message to each of the selected multiple providers.

1 20. The method of claim 14, wherein the step of notifying comprises the step of
2 sending a fax message to each of the selected multiple providers.

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1 21. The method of claim 14, wherein the step of responding comprises the step of
2 visiting the web site, entering an authentication code and responding to an appointment
3 request by the user.

1 22. The method of claim 14, wherein the step of displaying comprises the steps of
2 collating the responses by the system and forwarding the collated responses to the user.

1 23. The method of claim 14, wherein the step of displaying comprises the steps of
2 collating the responses by the system and showing the collated responses to the user
3 when the user logs in to the web site at a later time.

1 24. The method of claim 14, wherein the step of displaying comprises the step of
2 forwarding e-mail messages with the responses to the user.

1 25. The method of claim 14, wherein the step of confirming comprises the step of
2 confirming the one response directly with the one selected provider.

1 26. The method of claim 14, wherein the step of confirming comprises the step of
2 clicking on a button, on the web site, that is associated with the one response.

1 27. A method for enabling a facilitator to mediate communication exchanges between
2 users and providers of a system that allows the users to simultaneously contact multiple
3 providers to secure an appointment on short notice, the method comprising the steps of:

4 allowing the facilitator to view exchanges and histories of exchanges between
5 users and providers;

6 contacting the facilitator, by a user, to specify at least one required criterion for
7 selecting a provider;

8 determining, by the facilitator, each provider within a specified area that meets the
9 at least one required criterion, identifying each provider's proximity to the user's location
10 and providing a list of providers to the user;

11 selecting, by the user, multiple providers from the list and submitting the selected
12 multiple providers to the facilitator;

13 notifying, by the facilitator, the selected multiple providers;

14 responding, by the provider, to the notification;

15 communicating, by the facilitator, the responses to the user;

16 confirming, by the user, one response with one selected provider; and

17 notifying, by the facilitator, those providers whose responses were not accepted
18 by the user.

1 28. The method of claim 27, wherein the step of responding comprises the step of
2 faxing a response to a facilitator.

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1 29. The method of claim 27, wherein the step of allowing comprises the steps of
2 checking, by the system, that each request has been processed within a predefined period
3 of time and issuing a request to a monitoring group if the request has not been processed.

1 30. The method of claim 27, wherein the step of issuing comprises the step of
2 intervening to set up the appointment, by the monitoring group, if a provider does not
3 respond to a request from a user within a predefined time.

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